St. Louis, February 7, 2014 – The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) has released a comprehensive report, *2014 Trends in Rewards and Recognition*, revealing that businesses will emphasize social aspects, retention and measurable outcomes in their motivation programs this year.

In preparing this anticipated trends report, IRF researchers analyzed existing proprietary research, scanned incentive industry and business publications, and sought input from numerous industry professionals.

IRF President Melissa Van Dyke notes that the IRF’s research findings revealed 10 key trends – in addition to other 2014 indicators – and these are highlighted in the *2014 Trends in Rewards and Recognition Report*. Specific trends include:

- **Talent Wars and Leadership Squeeze:** Many companies are ignoring the jobless as potential candidates and instead targeting their competitors’ key employees. This makes it more important than ever to recognize and reward top performers and bind them to your company over the long term. Likewise, a shrinking leadership pipeline has left organizations struggling to develop organizational leadership capacity. In response, many firms are using existing rewards and recognition platforms to align workforce skills and link behavior to the firm’s broader business mission, as well as turning to incentive travel to bring top performers together to learn from one another and help solve key business issues.

- **‘Holistic’ Motivation is Hot:** The integration of social media technology into Rewards & Recognition programs is one of the most prevalent developments in recent years, with more than one-third of program owners incorporating gaming techniques or virtual elements. Corporate Social Responsibility also continues to be a hot topic for planners, with nearly half integrating it into their programs. Likewise, just over 60% of program owners say they’re either reviewing making wellness part of their programs, or have already implemented a series of changes to integrate it.

- **Expanding Budgets Improve Programs:** The recovering economy is having an extremely positive impact on motivation programs. Nearly 40% of incentive travel program owners and 42% of merchandise and gift card program are increasing their budgets this year. Program owners are significantly more likely now to say the economy is having a positive impact than they were two years ago.
- **Connecting People to Profits:** Businesses that have invested in building what some call a “culture of appreciation” are now looking for employee engagement to translate into more immediate, recognizable and revenue-related results. This represents a key opportunity for providers of non-cash award and incentive travel programs who can connect programs to the direct outcomes of sales, retention, productivity, and customer satisfaction.

- **Big Data:** The opportunity to collect and analyze the massive amounts of data produced daily is being hailed as the next big opportunity for businesses of all sizes. HR departments and providers of Rewards & Recognition programs that can capture, translate and integrate this data to more effectively support the company’s desired outcomes will be better able to position themselves to outperform the competition.

For additional details on the results and to read the full report, please visit: [http://theirf.org/2014-Trends-In-Employee-Engagement-Incentives-Rewards-Recognition.6115782.html](http://theirf.org/2014-Trends-In-Employee-Engagement-Incentives-Rewards-Recognition.6115782.html)

**About the IRF:**
The Incentive Research Foundation (theIRF.org) funds and promotes research to advance the science and enhance the awareness and appropriate application of motivation and incentives in business and industry globally. The goal is to increase the understanding, effective use, and resultant benefits of incentives to businesses that currently use incentives and others interested in improved performance.